

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

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HOUSE PANEL APPROVES MARKEY AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE \$75 MILLION FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEMS

***Funding doubled for training emergency personnel to respond to attacks using
weapons of mass destruction***

WASHINGTON, DC – One week after the *Washington Post* reported that the U.S. is drastically unprepared to deal with a nuclear attack, the House Energy and Commerce Committee approved an amendment offered by Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, that authorizes \$75 million funding for the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) for the Fiscal Year 2006, more than doubling the funding the program received last year. MMRS is the only federal program that helps first responders, medical personnel, emergency management workers, businesses and other stakeholders develop effective, integrated capabilities to minimize casualties in the event of a terrorist attack using a weapon of mass destruction, such as a chemical, nuclear, biological or radiological bomb. The MMRS program has provided funding for emergency personnel in Boston, Springfield and Worcester. When the Bush Administration eliminated funding for the MMRS program in its FY06 budget, Rep. Markey organized a bi-partisan letter to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security to urge restoration of funding for the program.

“I am pleased that the Energy and Commerce Committee has recognized the importance of this unique program,” Rep. Markey said. “The Metropolitan Medical Response System provides vital services that are urgently needed, given the determination of terrorist groups to acquire a weapon of mass destruction and detonate it within our country. Despite the dangers of nuclear proliferation and the devastation that a terrorist attack using a weapon of mass destruction could cause in our country, the Bush Administration deleted funding for the MMRS program in its budget. Today’s evacuation of the Capitol, White House, the Supreme Court and other Federal buildings reminds us that we must continue to prepare and improve our emergency response systems. I will continue to work to ensure that our nation’s first responders, medical personnel and emergency management workers receive the MMRS funding they need to perform their difficult jobs,” Rep. Markey said.

The MMRS program was established in the wake of the deadly release of sarin nerve gas in a Tokyo subway and the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995. The program provides funds to 125 municipal authorities in 43 states for local first responder planning, training, exercises, equipment, and pharmaceutical caches. Recent press articles have reported that only a fraction of first responders are trained and prepared for a nuclear attack. Homeland Security Council and Energy Department reports obtained by the *Washington Post* last week described the devastating effects a nuclear strike could have on communities across the country, unprepared to make the split second decisions to evacuate towns and cities.

Rep. Markey concluded, “In the post 9/11 era, there can be no doubt that Al Qaeda is willing and capable of launching attacks on the United States. Today, when the Capitol, White House, the Supreme Court and other Federal buildings were evacuated after a plane entered restricted airspace, we were reminded that our nation remains a terrorist target, and our first responders must have the tools they need to perform their difficult jobs. The MMRS program provides our first responders with indispensable tools, which would help minimize casualties if terrorists strike our country using a weapon of mass destruction,” Rep. Markey concluded.

A copy of the letter that Rep. Markey sent to the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee and additional information on the MMRS program is available at Rep. Markey’s website,

<http://www.house.gov/markey>.